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Release date: 09/18/01
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ELECTRICITY, WATER, AND ROADS FOR HANFORD'S FUTURE VITRIFICATION PLANT COMPLETED AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AND UNDER BUDGET

The U.S. Department of Energy's Office of River Protection (ORP) announced today that its tank farm contractor, CH2M HILL Hanford Group, Inc. (CHG), has completed construction of the infrastructure (electricity, water, and roads) for Hanford's future tank waste vitrification plant more than one year ahead of schedule and 29% under budget.

Hanford's 177 underground tanks contain 53 million gallons of radioactive and chemical wastes from the production of plutonium for national defense. The waste will be retrieved from the aging tanks and incorporated into a stable glass form in large melters in the vitrification plant. Construction of the vitrification plant on Hanford's Central Plateau is scheduled to begin in 2002.

"The completion of the infrastructure project represents one of the final steps before we begin site preparation and construction of Hanford's vitrification plant," said Harry Boston, ORP Manager. "The fact that it was completed early and under budget demonstrates our team is continuing to make progress on this critical project and that we are on track to keep our commitment to begin hot operations of the vitrification plant in 2007."

The infrastructure project was estimated to cost \$31 million and was originally scheduled to be complete in July 2002. CHG finished the project in August at a budget of just under \$22 million -- a savings of approximately \$9 million.

"Building the necessary infrastructure for the vitrification plant was a collaborative effort by several outstanding contractors and subcontractors," said Fran DeLozier, CHG President. "It also is a testament to doing business by using fixed price contracts and incentives to complete projects under budget and ahead of schedule."

The recently completed infrastructure includes a 62.5-million volt amp electrical substation with 230-kilovolt transmission lines -- equivalent to a system providing power for 6,000 homes. Power can be received from either the Columbia Generating Station or Priest Rapids Dam to run the future plant's massive glass melters without interruption.

Approximately three miles of pipeline was also constructed to deliver water for drinking, fire protection, and waste vitrification operations. Liquid effluent, or wastewater, will be sent to existing water treatment and disposal facilities at Hanford via another pipe system nearly two and a half miles long.

Roads near the vitrification plant site were also widened and reinforced in preparation for the heavy construction traffic anticipated once construction of the plant begins in 2002. A new road encircles the 65-acre site on Hanford's Central Plateau where the vitrification plant will be built.

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Note: Congress created the Office of River Protection in 1998 to manage the retrieval and treatment of 53 million gallons of tank waste and the closure of the underground storage tanks at the Hanford Site. More background information on the Office of River Protection can be found on the office's Web site at: <http://www.hanford.gov/orp>.

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Last Updated: 09/18/2001 13:51:40

